1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

326 563 Falasha smiths, whose women make pottery at the same time. This arrangement is not liked by the Falasha because of their religious obligations, even though they reside in a special guest hut, slaughter their own sheep and use their own utensils while at work for a distant Amhara hamlet. For they rest on Saturday, work on Sunday, and the more traditional among them have to undergo elaborate purification ceremonies upon their return home. [783]

This alternate, itinerant pattern probably developed during recent centuries when feudal warlords forced them to accompany their troops as ordnance, at any time, often during their entire lifetimes. This continued as late as the 1920's, when Ras Gugsa still ruled the province of Begemdir (Gondar). Since Menelik's conquest of distant Galla lands, in the late 19th century, Falasha smiths have been carried off farther than ever, and sometimes never again seen by their families. Ras Gugsa wanted to please Menelik in his Amharization program in the south, and ordered Coptic churches built by the Falashas in "pagan" or Muslim Galla areas, when their wartime duties were largely over. Some were given Shanqalla females to replace their own distant families. A few rose to the position of "bäjirond" (treasurer) and were given land property in lieu of salary. Thus an exception was made for these individuals, for Falashas were not permitted to purchase land, on condition that their offspring carry on the same services in the feudal armies. Now that these services have been abrogated, there are still a few land-holding Falasha families, the descendants of army-ordnance Falasha smiths.

793 also performs masses on specific occasions, including memorials and holy days, chants part of the liturgy, reads (but usually does not know how to translate) biblical portions from both New and Old Testament in the
[783] Geez language. Before performing the eucharist, the officiating priest is expected to abstain from sexual intercourse for 1 to 3 days, for this is regarded as polluting him (an Old Testament survival). Before such occasions he takes care to sleep on the mudbench of his hut, rather than on his "alga" bed. This procedure is followed Saturday night, before a baby's babtism, before giving ritual ablution to the dying, etc. He is also expected to wash his body before giving the eucharist (but in the dry season this is often overlooked).

A learned priest, more scholarly than the parish administrator or guardian of his flock, is given the special title "mämhër" (roughly, "professor"). He is usually an expert on the hymn book "degwa", and is employed in teaching it to upper grades in church school.
[792] When he becomes a monk, he is oftenappointed to "abbatachen" (lit. our father), abbot of a monastery, where his mild disposition enables him to keep the peace among hotheaded, ambitious monks, some of whom regard monasticism as a career. If the "mamher" continues to advance his knowledge of church literature and history and legends (e.g. the life of the saints), he receives the title "liq". He is usually one of the few Amhara who really
793 198 know and understand Geez well, including the subtle shades of meaning of the many diverse grammatical forms;

608 852 to the abolition of 1942), the godparents usually obtained his freedom. The relationship is one of artificial kinship. To symbolize this literally, the godfather and godmother clasp the right thumb of the baby and swear by the Trinity that they will not distinguish between their own children and the godchild.

●783 At first baptism, baby or adult, the entire body is immersed or bathed in holy water. Every year, on the festival of "Ṭəmqät" (Epiphany), the sprinkling of the crowd with baptismal water is considered re-baptism, to wash away any breach with Christianity during the year. A woman who has had sexual intercourse with a Muslim must undergo complete baptism, otherwise the neighbors and the church will ostracize her. A person severely ill and considered possessed by demons is rebaptized.

872 At five, boys and girls begin useful functions in the family economy, and therefore boys are often 10 years old before they begin to go to church school. This schooling takes place under the shady cypress trees in the churchyard, under the direction of a young priest or däbtära. The method is rote learning of Geez and Amharic reading, and liturgy, beginning with the Gospel of St. John: "mäläktä yohanesä hawareya". Usually neither translation from the Geez liturgical language nor writing are taught. Graduates of this 3-year school qualify to serve as deacons. In recent years, they may then enter the 3rd grade of a government elementary school. Even church students now use the one-page printed "fidäl" (alphabet) in Geez-Amharic script, which, in addition,

872 has the photograph of Emperor Haile Selassie and the traditional Gospel of St. John in Geez. Priests now often teach the beginnings of basic arithmetic, in church schools.

783 In adult life, the church affects the layman less through participation in worship than through his individual confessor, the "näfs abbat", (lit. soul father). Each person is supposed to see him at least once a month, and he soon becomes a personal advisor, confidante, marriage counselor, etc. Therefore, even when a person changes residence, he often maintains this relationship to his "näfs abbat". If he were to take on a new one, the penalty assigned for sins (which the confessor keeps as a sort of fee) would be higher. His regular confessor, who knows his financial condition, asks little beyond the seasonal and festival gifts considered his due. In time of trouble, the regular confessor will appear as a character witness in court, or as "wäs" (guarantor) to help him obtain employment or to keep him out of jail pending trial.

585 Most laymen, are not married by eucharistic marriage in church (the "qurban"). There is no social or religious stigma to marrying outside the church; in fact the priest comes to the secular ceremony ("semanya") to bless the couple. But it does mean technical excommunication, and the couple cannot wear the "aklil" crown at church festivals and parades.

763 As a further result, such a couple cannot receive full last rites, though the confessor-priest will come

TK 795 held high, and everyone acclaims the miracle. Everyone tries to obtainssome of the water to drink; the bottom of the hole keeps filling up for some time. Later, mud from the hole is passed around on green leaves, [751] and many, especially women, smear it on their foreheads, against sickness, demons, and barrenness which afflicts many of the townswomen. Some older Muslims recite prayers. The mood is generally gay, and the women banter happily from an hour after sunrise to high noon, when the feast is over, Then all begin to return to Gondar town, after pledging gifts for the next celebration of the saint's day, provided he has fulfilled their prayers.

Meanwhile, Copts, mostly women, including many barren ones, have joined the Muslim women on the hill. No special notice is taken of them; they are tolerated, and not insulted as they would be on other occasions. The Copts bring their own live sheep and the few Coptic men present slaughter them apart from the Muslims, so that their formula "In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, One Divinity", is not heard. The Christian women and children also smear some of the saint's mud on their foreheads, and also vow donations to the next Sheykh Abader feast if their prayers are fulfilled. [783] They bear the tell-tale marks until they reach their own homes in Gondar, and are not punished for what otherwise might at least require re-baptism. Like Muslims, they even bring mud, rocks, and water from the saint's hill to their ill kinfolk. Coptic men do not flaunt their participation so freely. The Coptic priests, who of

795 His social status compares to that of a "great man" (telleq säw),
756 but much of this is due to the fear in which he is held, because of his power over the supernatural world, in Amhara belief. There is fear that if someone were to offend him, he might use his powers to do evil - though black magic is not his usual metier. (The "love magic" of the däbtära has been described in relation to sex).

[539] "of insects, the worst is the scorpion;
of men, the worst is the däbtära".

[574] For the dabtara are unabashed in inviting themselves to feasts, weddings and any distribution of goods (e.g. parceling out of meat as soon as an ox has been slaughtered). In fact, they often act as if the host owed them an apology for not having sent an official invitation. Therefore, dabtara are usually invited to family feasts even if they are not kin.

795 The däbtära learns his craft through apprenticeship, beginning
756 when in the upper grades of church school. To achieve this, he
874 must be "attentam" (of unmixed Amhara or Tigre stock), have a good chanting voice and musical ear, be good in school, and find a däbtära-teacher willing to impart his knowledge to him. At this stage in church school he begins to be permitted to learn to write; and is not punished for doodling - forbidden at lower grades for fear a student might stumble on a formula and misuse a powerful spell.

795 There is even one priestly function which the däbtära occasionally
756 carries out. That is "re-baptism". He may re-baptize a patient vic-
[168] timized by ganyen, sometimes also cases of buda, as part of exorcism.

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

north-west of Zanjira near the upper margin of the sheet. The church clings to the side of a steep little hill which stands almost isolated among vast gorges and commands the grandest panorama imaginable of this tormented country. The hill is joined to Zanjira by a narrow causeway little lower than the general plateau, flat on top and dropping away in cliffs on either side, so regular that it almost seems artificial. Harris records a saying which evidently refers to this place: "from Iteghe you can see the Echeghe" (*i.e.* the chief of the monks, who then lived in Gondar). To be sure, one does seem to overlook a great part of the world from this point of vantage.

Every church is the centre of a radiating system of small paths (not shown on the map) chiefly used by people coming to service. There are of course regular Sunday services, but these are not very well attended. More important are the special festivals observed on certain dates of the Ethiopian month, which may fall on any day of the week. In this area the monthly festivals universally observed, on which no work could be done, were those of St. Michael, St. Mary, and St. George, on the 12th, 21st, and 23rd respectively, as well as "Bal Wold," a commemoration of the Birth of Christ, on the 29th of each month. Of still greater significance in the life of the people are the annual festivals, falling on the same day of the month as the monthly ones but in certain months only. On these annual festivals nearly the whole population makes its way to the churches dedicated to the particular saint commemorated. Often they will visit the local *tebel* or Holy Water and bathe there early in the morning before service. Going on to the church, all remain outside, for there would be no room for such a crowd within the cramped passages of the church itself. In the middle of the morning the *tabot* or ark is brought out and ceremonial dances held before it. Finally, before the service ends, it will be carried three times round the church in procession, attended by magnificent crosses and gaudy umbrellas. These are occasions of great popular excitement and rejoicing, and the congregations are often enormous. The long service over, they break up into gossiping groups, and go back to social lunches in each other's huts.

Enough has been said to show how large a part is played among these people by the Church and its priesthood. The country has indeed been described as priest-ridden, the people as over-dominated or even enslaved by the Church. If so, this servitude, at least in the country, is still a willing and unquestioned one. It is also true to say that without the Church the social structure of this countryside would fall to pieces, and life would lose not only its coherence but nearly all its variety and colour.

It was mentioned above that, to meet the needs of an increasing plateau population, several new churches had been founded in recent times in the area covered by the map. Two of these were established by "division" of a church which already existed in the gorge. Each original church had two *tabots* one of which was removed for the new foundation, for no church can exist without a *tabot* or altar-slab, this being the only part of the church which is consecrated. Thus the Mariam of the Tallak Amba plateau was derived from the Mariam half-way down the cliff about a mile to the north-east; and similarly a new Ghiorghis of the plateau, just east of Daloti, from the Ghiorghis in the gorge below. Of these "divisions," both of which took place

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

TRAVELS

TO DISCOVER

THE SOURCE OF THE NILE.

BOOK V.—CONTINUED.

CHAP. XII.

State of Religion—Circumcision, Excision, &c.

346 THERE is no country in the world in which there are so many churches as in Abyssinia. Though the country is very mountainous, and consequently the view much obstructed, it is very seldom you see less than five or six churches; and, if you are on a commanding ground, five times that number. Every great [783] man, that dies, thinks he has atoned for all his wickedness if he leaves a fund to build a church, or has built one in his lifetime. The king builds many. Wherever a victory is gained, there a church* is erected in 727 the very field, stinking with the putrid bodies of the slain. Formerly this was only the case when the ene-

* The oldest churches in Habbesh are those in the province of Tigre. Axum, now in ruins, possessed many before the Adelan war. A list of these is given in the Appendix of Kebir Neguste, or Chronicle of Axum; and of the lands which they possessed, as given by several kings. E.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

346 my was Pagan or Infidel; now the same is observed
[727] when the victories are over Christians.

346 The situation of a church is always chosen near
running water, for the convenience of their purifica-
351 tions and ablutions, in which they observe strictly the
●[783] Levitical law. They are always placed upon the top of some beautiful, round hill, which is surrounded entirely with rows of the oxycedrus, or Virginia cedar, which grows here in great beauty and perfection, and is called Arz *. There is nothing adds so much to the beauty of the country as these churches, and the plantations about them.

In the middle of this plantation of cedars is interspersed, at proper distances, a number of those beautiful trees called Cusso, which grow very high, and are all extremely picturesque.

346 All the churches are round, with thatched roofs; their summits are perfect cones; the outside is surrounded by a number of wooden pillars, which are nothing else than the trunks of the cedar-tree, and are placed to support the edifice, about eight feet of the roof projecting beyond the wall of the church, which forms an agreeable walk, or colonade, around it in hot weather, or in rain. The inside of the church is in several divisions, according as is prescribed by the law of Moses. The first is a circle somewhat wider than the inner one; here the congregation sit and pray. Within this is a square, and that square is divided by a veil or curtain, in which is another very

* Ludolf, in his dictionary, says, this word, in Hebrew, signifies any tall tree. In this, however, he is mistaken. The translators did not, indeed, know what tree it was, and so have said this to cover their ignorance; but Arz is as exclusively the oxycedrus, as is an oak or an elm when so named. Arz is indeed a tall tree, but every tall tree is not Arz, which is the Virginia berry-bearing cedar.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

small division answering to the holy of holies. This is so narrow, that none but the priests can go into it. You are bare-footed whenever you enter the church; and, if bare-footed, you may go through every part of it, if you have any such curiosity, provided you are pure, i. e. have not been concerned with women for 24 hours before, or touched carrion, or dead bodies (a curious assemblage of ideas); for in that case you are not to go within the precincts, or outer circumference of the church, but stand and say your prayers at an awful distance among the cedars.

All persons of both sexes, under Jewish disqualifications, are obliged to observe this distance; and this is always a place belonging to the church, where, unless in Lent, you see the greatest part of the congregation; but this is left to your own conscience; and, if there was either great inconvenience in the one situation, or great satisfaction in the other, the cause would be otherwise.

When you go to the church, you put off your shoes before your first entering the outer precinct; but you must leave a servant there with them, or else they will be stolen, if good for any thing, by the priests and monks before you come out of the church. At entry you kiss the threshold, and two door-posts, go in and say what prayer you please; that finished, you come out again, and your duty is over. The churches are full of pictures, painted on parchment, and nailed upon the walls, in a manner little less slovenly than you see paltry prints in beggarly country ale-houses. There has been always a sort of painting known among the scribes, a daubing much inferior to the worst of our sign-painters. Sometimes, for a particular church, they get a number of pictures of saints, on skins of parchment, ready finished from Cairo, in a style very little superior to these performances of

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

I shall take notice of only one instance in many, because it has been insisted upon by both parties with unusual vehemence, and very little candour. 779

It was settled by the first general council, that one baptism only was necessary for the regeneration of man, for freeing him from the sin of our first parents, and listing him under the banner of Christ; "I confess one baptism for the remissions of sins," says the Symbol. Now, it was maintained by the Jesuits, that in Abyssinia, once every year, they baptized all grown people, or adults. I shall, as briefly as possible, set down what I myself saw while on the spot. 783 796

The small river, running between the town of Adowa and the church, had been dammed up for several days; the stream was scanty, so that it scarcely overflowed. It was in some places three feet deep, in some, perhaps, four, or little more. Three large tents were pitched the morning before the feast of the Epiphany; one, on the north, for the priests to repose in during intervals of the service, and, besides this, one to communicate in: on the south there was a third tent for the monks and priests of another church to rest themselves in their turn. About twelve clock at night the monks and priests met together, and began their prayers and psalms at the water-side, one party relieving each other. At dawn of day the governor, Welleta Michael, came hither with some soldiers to raise men for Ras Michael, then on his march against Waragna Fasil, and sat down on a small hill by the water-side, the troops all skirmishing on foot and on horseback around them.

As soon as the sun began to appear, three large crosses of wood were carried by three priests dressed in their sacerdotal vestments, and who, coming to the side of the river, dipt the cross into the water, and all this time the firing, skirmishing, and praying went on to-

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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783 796 gether. The priests with the crosses returned, one of their number before them carrying something less than an English quart of water in a silver cup, or chalice; when they were about fifty yards from Welleta Michael, that general stood up, and the priest took as much water as he could hold in his hand, and sprinkled it upon his head, holding the cup at the same time to Welleta Michael's mouth to taste; after which the priest received it back again, saying, at the same time, "Gzier ybarak," which is simply, "May God bless you." Each of the three crosses was then brought forward to Welleta Michael, and he kissed them. The ceremony of sprinkling the water was then repeated to all the great men in the tent, all cleanly dressed as in gala. Some of them, not contented with aspersion, received the water in the palms of their hands joined, and drank it there; more water was brought for those that had not partaken of the first; and, after the whole of the governor's company was sprinkled, the crosses returned to the river, their bearers singing hallelujahs, and the skirmishing and firing continuing.

Janni, my Greek friend, had recommended me to the priest of Adowa; and, as the governor had placed me by him, I had an opportunity, for both these reasons, of being served among the first. My friend, the priest, sprinkled water upon my head, and gave me his blessing in the same words he had used to the others; but, as I saw it was not necessary to drink, I declined putting the cup to my lips, for two reasons; one, because I knew the Abyssinians have a scruple to eat or drink after strangers; the other, because I apprehended the water was not perfectly clean; for no sooner had the crosses first touched the pool, and the cup filled from the clean part for the governor, than two or three hundred boys, calling themselves *deacons*,

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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plunged in with only a white cloth, or rag, tied round their middle; in all other respects they were perfectly naked. All their friends and relations (indeed everybody) went close down to the edge of the pool, where water was thrown upon them, at first decently enough, by boys of the town, and those brought on purpose as deacons; but, after the better sort of people had received the aspersion, the whole was turned into a riot, the boys, muddying the water, threw it round them upon every one they saw well-dressed or clean. The governor retreated first, then the monks, and then the crosses, and left the brook in possession of the boys and blackguards, who rioted there till two o'clock in the afternoon.

I must, however, observe, that, a very little time after the governor had been sprinkled, two horses and two mules, belonging to Ras Michael and Ozoro Esther, came and were washed. Afterwards the soldiers went in and bathed their horses and guns; those who had wounds bathed them also. I saw no women in the bath uncovered, even to the knee; nor did I see any person of the rank of decent servants go into the water at all, except with the horses. Heaps of platters and pots, that had been used by Mahometans or Jews, were brought thither likewise to be purified; and thus the whole ended.

I saw this ceremony performed afterwards at Kahha, near Gondar, in presence of the king, who drank some of the water, and was sprinkled by the priests; then took the cup in his hand, and threw the rest that was left upon Amha Yasous*, saying, "I will be your deacon;" and this was thought a high compli-

* Prince of Shoa, often spoken of in the sequel.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

783 ment, the priest giving him his blessing at the same
796 time, but offering him no more water.

I shall now state, in his own words, the account given of this by Alvarez, chaplain to the Portuguese embassy, under Don Roderigo de Lima.

The king had invited Don Roderigo de Lima, the Portuguese ambassador, to be present at the celebration of the festival of the Epiphany. They went about a mile and a half from their former station, and encamped upon the side of a pond, which had been prepared for the occasion. Alvarez says, that, in their way, they were often asked by those they met or overtook, "Whether or not they were going to be baptized?" to which the chaplain and his company answered in the negative, as having been already once baptized in their childhood.

"In the night," says he, "a great number of priests assembled about the pond, roaring and singing with a view of blessing the water. After midnight the baptism began. The Abuna Mark, the king and queen, were the first that went into the lake; they had each a piece of cotton cloth about their middle, which was just so much more than the rest of the people had. At the sun-rising the baptism was most thronged; after which, when Alvarez * came, the lake was full of holy water, into which they had poured oil."

It should seem, from this outset of his narrative, that he was not at the lake till the ceremony was half over, and did not see the benediction of the water at all, nor the curious exhibition of the King, Queen, and Abuna, and their cotton cloths. As for the circumstance of the oil being poured into the water, I

* Vide Alvarez's narrative in his account of the embassy of Don Roderigo de Lima, page 155.

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will not positively contradict it; for, though I was early there, it might have escaped me if it was done in the dark. However, I never heard it mentioned as part of the ceremony; and it is probable I should, if any such thing was really practised; neither was I in time to have seen it at Kahha. 783 796

"Before the pond a scaffold was built, covered round with planks, within which sat the king, looking towards the pond, his face covered with blue taffeta, while an old man, who was the king's tutor, was standing in the water up to the shoulders, naked as he was born, and half dead with cold, for it had frozen violently in the night. All those that came near him he took by the head and plunged them in the water, whether men or women, saying, in his own language, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Now Shoa, where the king was then, is in lat. 8° N. and the sun was in 22° south declination, advancing northward, so the sun was, on the day of the Epiphany, within 30° of the zenith of the bathing-place. The thermometer of Fahrenheit rises at Gondar about that time to 68°, so in Shoa it cannot rise to less than 70°, for Gondar is in lat. 12° N. that is 4° farther northward, so it is not possible water should freeze, nor did I ever see ice in Abyssinia, not even on the highest or coldest mountains. January is one of the hottest months in the year, day and night the sky is perfectly serene, nor is there a long disproportioned winter night. At Shoa the days are equal to the nights, at least as to sense, even in the month of January. [132]

The baptism, Alvarez says, began at midnight, and the old tutor dipt every person under water, taking him by the head, saying, "I baptize thee in the name

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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783 of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." 796 It was most thronged at sun-rise, and ended about nine o'clock; a long time for an old man to stand in frozen water.

The number (as women were promiscuously admitted) could not be less than 40,000; so that even the nine hours this baptist-general officiated, he must have had exercise enough to keep him warm, if 40,000 (many of them naked beauties) passed through his hands.

The women were stark naked before the men, not even the rag about them. Without such a proper medium as frozen water, I fear it would not have contributed much to the interests of religion to have trusted a priest (even an old one) among so many bold and naked beauties, especially as he had the first six hours of them in the dark.

783 796 291 831 The Abuna, the king, and queen, were the three first baptized, all three being absolutely naked, having only a cotton cloth round their middle. I am sure there never could be a greater deviation from the manners of any kingdom, than this is from those of Abyssinia. The king is always covered; you seldom see any part of him but his eyes. The queen and every woman in Abyssinia, in public and private, (I mean where nothing is intended but conversation) are covered to the chin. It is a disgrace to them to have even their feet seen by strangers; and their arms and hands are concealed even to their nails. A curious circumstance, therefore, it would have been for the king to be so liberal of his queen's charms, while he covers his own face with blue taffeta; but to imagine that the Abuna, a Coptish monk, bred in the desert of St Macarius, would expose himself naked among naked women, contrary to the usual custom of the celebration he observes in his own church, is monstrous, and

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must exceed all belief whatever. As the Abuna Mark too was of the reasonable age of 110 years, he might, I think, have dispensed at that time of life with a bathing gown, especially as it was frost. 783 796 [298] [831]

The old man in the pond repeated the formula, "I baptise you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," in his own language; and Alvarez, it is plain, understood not one word of Abyssinian. Yet, on the other hand, he speaks Latin to the king, who wonderfully understands him, and answers as decisively on the merits of the dispute as if he had been educated in the Sorbonne. "Confiteor unum baptizma," says Alvarez *, was a constitution of the Nicene council under Pope Leo. Right, says the king, whose church, however, anathematized Leo and the council he presided at; which both the king and Alvarez should have known was not the Nicene council, though the words of the symbol quoted are thought to be part of a confession framed by that assembly.

"Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit salvus erit," says Alvarez. "You say right," answers the king, "as to baptism; these are the words of our Saviour; but this present ceremony was lately invented by a grandfather of mine, in favour of such as have turned Moors, and are desirous again of becoming Christians."

I should think, in the first place, this answer of the king should have let Alvarez see no baptism was intended there; or, if it was a re-baptism, it only took place in favour of those who had turned Moors, and must therefore have been but partial. If this was really the case, what had the king, queen, and Abuna,

* Vid. Alvarez, hoc loco. Ramusio. Viaggi. p. 254.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

783 to do in it? Sure they had neither apostatized, nor
796 was the company of apostates a very creditable society for them.

Alvarez, to persuade us this is real baptism, says that oil was thrown into the pond before he came. He will not charge himself with having seen this, and it is probably a falsehood. But he knew it was an essential in baptism in all the churches in the East; so indeed is salt, which he should have said was here used likewise: then he would have had all the materials of Greek baptism; and this salt might have contributed to cooling the water, that had frozen under the rays of a burning sun.

Alvarez must have seen, that not only men and women go to be washed in the pool, but horses, cows, mules, and a prodigious number of asses. Are these baptised? I would wish to know the formula the reverend baptist-general used on their occasion.

There is but one church where I ever saw sacred rites, or something like baptism, conferred upon asses; it is, I think, at Rome, on St Andrew's or St Patrick's day. It should be St Balaam's, if he was in the Roman kalender as high as he is in the Abyssinian. In that church (it is, I think, on Monte Cavallo) all sorts of asses, about and within Rome, are gathered together, and showers of holy water and blessings rained by a priest upon them. What is the formula I do not know; although it is a joke put upon strangers, especially of one nation, to assemble them there; or whether the two churches of Rome and Abyssinia differ so much in this as in other points of discipline, I am not informed; but the rationality and decency of such a ceremony being the same in all churches, the service performed at the time should be the same likewise.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
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I will not then have any scruple to say, that this whole account of Alvarez is a gross fiction; that no baptism, or any thing like baptism, is meant by the ceremony; that a man is no more baptised by keeping the anniversary of our Saviour's baptism, than he is crucified by keeping his crucifixion. The commemoration of our Saviour's baptism on the epiphany, and the blessing the waters that day, is an old observance of the eastern church, formerly performed in public in Egypt, as now in Ethiopia. Since that of Alexandria fell into the hands of Mahometans, the fear of insult and profanation has obliged them to confine this ceremony, and all other processions, within the walls of their churches, in each of which there is constantly a place devoted to this use. Those that cannot attend the ceremony of aspersion in the church, especially sick or infirm people, have the water sent to them, and a large contribution is made for the patriarch, or bishop; yet nobody ever took it into their heads to tax either Greek or Armenian with a repetition of baptism.

Monsieur de Tournefort *, in his travels through the Levant, gives you a figure of the Greek priest, who blesses the water in a peculiar habit, with a pastoral staff in his hand.

But, besides this, various falsehoods have likewise been propagated about the manner of baptism practised in Abyssinia; all in order to impugn the validity of it, and to excuse the rash conduct of the Jesuits for re-baptising all the Abyssinians, as if they had been a Jewish and Pagan people that never had been baptised at all. The violation of this article of the creed, or confession of Nice, was a cause of great offence to the

* Tournef. tom. i. p. 111.

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783 Abyssinians, and of the misfortunes that happened
796 afterwards. The whole of the Abyssinian service of baptism is in their liturgy. The Jesuits had plenty of copies in their hands, and could have pointed out the part of the service that was heretical, if they had pleased; they did not pretend, however, to do this, and their silence condemns them.

As for the idle stories that are told of the words pronounced, such as,—"I baptise you in the name of the Holy Trinity,"—"In the name of Peter and Paul,"—"I baptise you in the water of Jordan,"—"May God baptise you,"—"May God wash you," and many others, they are all invented by the Jesuits, to excuse the repetition of baptism in Abyssinia, which there was no sort of occasion for, as they might have examined the words and form in the liturgies, which are in every church; and I must here only observe, that if, as the chaplain Alvarez says, the priest in the pool, on the festival of the Epiphany, was so fond of the proper words, as even at that time, to say "I baptise you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," the words he quotes to shew that this immersion in water on the Epiphany is a real baptism, I cannot comprehend why they should vary them to other words, when nothing but baptism is meant. But this I can bear evidence of, that, in no time when I was present, as I have above a hundred times been, at the baptism both of adults and infants, aye, and of apostates too, I never heard other words pronounced than the orthodox baptismal ones, "I baptise thee in the name of "the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," immerging the child in pure water, into which they first pour a small quantity of oil of olives, in the form of a cross.

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principal revenue of the clergy is the presents made by The 794
those who are sick, or dying.

The dress of the Acab saat is a purple burnoose, with a 292
white turban, not unlike the Turkish Imams, or a white handkerchief hanging loose behind. The Kees hatze is the king's official confessor, official Alaka of the church of Tecla-haimanout, and curator of the two churches of Gondar.

The Abuna's words of absolution, in a case of excommunication, is, "Gzier ephtac," God absolve thee. [783]●

Women, after having born a son, are excluded from the 796
church 40 days, and if a daughter, 80. The really married 784
are those who receive the sacrament on that occasion. Persons who have been connected with any woman, are excluded from church during three days; if that connection has been promiscuous, they are excluded seven; and then even admitted to receive the sacrament. If a man, really married, is guilty with another's wife, he is not debarred a longer period. Women in the menses are not allowed to enter the church till seven days afterwards. Circumcision is performed on the eight, and baptism is celebrated on the forty-first day of the child's age. On all the fore-mentioned occasions they only come within the inner precinct, and kiss the walls and door-posts of the church. The clergy are rigid in these matters, and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the churches are ill-attended. It is their only duty; the monks making no scruple of confessing that they cannot enter the church, for that day they had to do with a woman, which is not attended with any impeachment.

[846] [841] [304] [852]

Geography and revenue of Abyssinia.—The Iteghe from Bure 131
in two days arrived at Metchakel, in her way to Gojam: It 361
may be about as far as from this (Gondar) to Caroota; I suppose from 30 to 32 miles at farthest. From Metchakel to Nazarit six days easy journey; from 10 to 12 miles, I suppose, *per diem*. Gojam here belongs to Ayto Aylo, son of Ozoro Welleta Israel. The Galla are Toluma. The Galla 101
who border on Amhara are much the worst of all the Galla, and the least worst are the Edjow east of them, bordering upon Begemder and Angot, called Guangoul Galla. Those near Amhara are Wetchali, Woolo, Amito, and Toluma;

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 794 795 are left free to a large extent. Since every day of the month except the thirtieth is sanctified by dedication to some saint, Mass must be performed virtually *121 79 every day, a norm which is actually fulfilled by churches which have a numerous clergy. The burden for individual clergymen is kept small by a system of rotation. The average parish church will have services perhaps ten to fifteen times a month, which is still too often for heavy popular attendance. Even on Sundays and the most important holidays, when the laity are expected to attend, their participation is excused by other considerations. Those who have eaten earlier in the day, who have had sexual relations the night before, or who are harboring a grudge in their "stomach" are not even supposed to come to church. If they do come, they sit outside the wall chatting with one another while the Mass is performed inside.

*121 794 795 783 Customs concerning Communion and Confession likewise give the individual a wide range of freedom. Partaking of the Communion is not required of anyone; the experience simply is available to those who are ritually pure (children, and those who have married by the *querbān*), if they are so inclined. Confession is not mandatory, but according to personal inclination. Every man has the right to choose his own personal confessor or "soul-father," though if satisfied with the one of his father, he may retain him. (A woman adopts the confessor of her husband.) The soul-father's advice may be sought when a problem arises. If a man sins—breaks the fast, works on a holiday, commits theft or murder—he is supposed to confess. If he chooses to do so, the soul-father will prescribe a certain penance—fasting an extra amount, sleeping on the floor for a period, giving something to the poor or to the church. But the initiative is entirely up to the sinner and probably more often than not he keeps the offense to himself. The proportion of Amhara who keep every fast strictly, go to church a few times a month, and confess their transgressions to the soul-father is small; in the estimate of one Amhara informant, less than five per cent.

*121 794 575 Still greater permissiveness may be observed in connection with the religious fraternal associations known as the *māhebar*. The *māhebar* consists of a group of people from the same general area, usually of the same sex, who meet once a month on the day devoted to the saint for whom the association is named. The place of meeting rotates among the homes of the members, and the soul-father of the host is always present to bless the occasion. The meetings consist of much eating, drinking, and conviviality. Membership in a *māhebar* is purely voluntary, and the individual who wishes to join one usually has a choice among several in a given area.*

For the Amhara laity, then, a few burdensome ritual and fiscal constraints

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[735] * There is a variant of the *māhebar* known as the *senbatē*, whose members take turns in providing food for the clergy and poor folk on Sundays.